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Illabo Public School

Policy Document

Excursion Policy

Including Camps, Performances and School based activities



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This policy sets out clearly the organisation of excursions, performances and school-based activities outside normal routine; safety considerations, system and legal requirements, expectations of behaviour and the education purpose of these experiences.

RATIONALE

Enhancement to in-school, classroom based programs, in the form of excursions and changes to routine, are an integral part of a child's education. These organised experiences, when fully integrated with classroom work, contribute to children's growth and development through:

- ❑ Enriching student's experiences.
- ❑ Broadening student's concepts.
- ❑ Reinforcing the achievement of outcomes.
- ❑ Providing opportunities for the development of appropriate social skills.
- ❑ Promoting the development of self-esteem.

There are legal and system requirements that must be met before students can attend an excursion.

DEFINITIONS

<i>Excursion</i>	An educational visit initiated, organised and supervised by the school for a specific educational purpose. The venue is outside the school grounds. Sports carnivals and inter-school sport, conducted outside the school grounds are classed as excursions.
<i>Change of Routine</i>	A change of routine refers to any alteration to the normal classroom program for which planning on a stage, joint stage or whole school basis is required. For example visiting performance, integrated unit culmination activities, mini sports carnivals.
<i>Duty of Care</i>	<p>The DET and its staff owe a duty of care to students to take <i>reasonable</i> care to protect students against risks of injury which are <i>reasonably</i> foreseeable. This duty extends to taking reasonable care to prevent a student from injuring him or herself, injuring others or damaging property.</p> <p>Duty of care is owed to students in the school environment and while on excursions.</p>
<i>Foreseeable Risk</i>	A foreseeable risk is a risk which a <i>reasonable</i> person could be expected to identify as a risk. In identifying a foreseeable risk it is expected that procedures would be put in place, or measures taken to reduce the likelihood of the risk occurring or, if possible, eliminating the risk completely.

FUNDAMENTAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

1. Determining the educational value of an excursion must take account of the needs and resources of the school, the needs of the students and the total learning program.
2. Excursions, though not compulsory to attend, are inclusive, and all students within the specific learning group are to be given the opportunity to participate providing a student is not on a STRIKE THREE behaviour card.
3. A duty of care is owed to students in the school environment and while on excursions.
4. The DEC's duty of care owed to students for the duration of an excursion cannot be delegated from the school to parents, caregivers, volunteers or employees of external organisations.
5. The obligation to report suspected risk of harm to children and young people applies throughout all stages of an excursion, as it does in schools.

6. A risk assessment is to be conducted and a risk management plan developed **before** seeking approval for any excursion. (See Appendix 1 – Excursion Timeline)
7. Signed consent forms granting permission for students to participate in excursions and a medical information form are to be obtained from parents or caregivers.
8. Safe transport or a safe walking route is to be organised for excursions.
9. Students must behave appropriately at all times while on excursions, including when animals are encountered.

SCHOOL PLANNING PROCEDURES

In order for the learning opportunities of an excursion to be optimised, the planning process must be thorough and comprehensive. The following steps are a recommended sequence.

1. Determine the educational value of an excursion, taking into account the needs and resources of the school, the needs of the students and the value/impact of the excursion on the total learning program.
2. Determine whether the excursion can be inclusive of all students. "Excursions are inclusive, and all students within the specific learning group are to be given the opportunity to participate, including students with disabilities." (DEC Policy) **However, in some cases students who have demonstrated unsatisfactory behaviour may be prevented from attending an excursion as a consequence of the Illabo Public School Student Welfare Policy. This would be directly related to the perceived safety risk of students (to self and/ or others) in relation to their behaviour.**
 - ❑ Organising teachers should ensure that individual health care plans for students with health care needs or disabilities include provision for the management of such conditions on excursions. A copy of this plan should be given to the teacher in charge of the excursion and its implications discussed before departure.
 - ❑ Pre-excursion planning may include a visit to the proposed excursion site by teachers so that decisions on supervision and injury prevention are well informed and so that access for disabled students is investigated.
 - ❑ The extent of pre-excursion planning will depend on the nature of the excursion and its location. In many situations prior experience of the site or a briefing from a reasonable person with a sound knowledge of the site will suffice.
 - ❑ However, a visit to the proposed excursion site is recommended when unfamiliar or potentially high risk activities are contemplated e.g. wilderness camping or field trips to inhospitable terrain. In such circumstances the pre –excursion visit should address issues such as access, injury prevention and emergency evacuation.
3. Consult with the venue, service provider, school calendar and principal's diary regarding suitable dates.
4. Consult with and identify the number of staff required to ensure the excursion can be conducted safely.
5. Identify all the costs involved in conducting the excursion, including 'incidental' such as photography, printing digital photographs on the colour laser printer, casual relief, special equipment etc.
6. If the total cost of the excursion is over \$1,000, three (3) quotes must be obtained. The three quotes need to be filed with the excursion organization documentation in the school office.
7. Draft the information and permission note for parents.
8. Present the Excursion/Camp/ Performance/ School-Based Activity application and all the associated notes to the principal for approval. At this point all details must be complete.
9. Ensure that all the documents relating to the excursion are placed in the Excursion Folder kept in the staffroom.

ACCESS TO PLANNING DOCUMENTS

The following documents are to be considered:

- IPS Excursion /Camp/Performance/ School-Based Activity Policy
- Prohibited Employment Declaration Summary Form Blank risk assessment form
- Completed risk assessment forms for all sports and transport by walking, train or bus

All excursion, sport and change of routine organising teachers are strongly encouraged to save all the documents relevant to their excursion in a folder, labelled with the excursion name, in the Excursion folder held in the staffroom. Keeping an electronic version is also advised.

This will facilitate planning in following years.

PARENT INFORMATION NOTES - Excursion/Camp/Performance/ School-Based Activity

Parents will be sent a comprehensive information note regarding the planned excursion/change of routine at least two (2) weeks prior to the date of the activity.

The note will include the following details:

- Curriculum link and follow up to the excursion at school;
- Description of all the planned activities the students will experience¹
- Date of the excursion/change of routine;
- Deadline date for the return of permission notes and payment;
- Time of departure and return to school;
- Details regarding travel arrangements;
- Clothing requirements e.g. school uniform, walking shoes etc.
- Details of safety equipment – mouth guards, sun screen, hats, hard hats, safety vests etc;
- Code of behaviour agreement;
- Permission sign off;
- Medical information form²;
- Where an excursion involved water sport or swimming the note must include a section where the parent indicates the child's swimming ability³.

In the case of a video/DVD screening at school, the note should advise parents of the classification of the film/DVD by the Office of Film and Literature Classification.

¹ Students participating in an excursion must not be permitted to engage in additional or alternative activities, which were not originally scheduled in the program, and for which parental or caregiver approval would normally have been necessary (e.g. horse riding or water activities).

² Notes should include the following information:

Emergency contact details; medicare card number.

List existing medical conditions or illnesses (include asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, allergies etc.). Outline the treatment for each. Leave appropriate space for the parent to respond.

Outline special dietary needs including possible reaction to inappropriate diet. Leave appropriate space for the parent to respond.

Medication(s) to be administered during the excursion. Include name of medication, instructions for administration, time of administration, and any possible reactions. Leave appropriate space for the parent to respond.

³ This excursion will involve students in water sports and/or swimming. Please circle one of the following options to describe your child's swimming ability:

My child is a NON-SWIMMER WEAK SWIMMER AVERAGE SWIMMER

DEADLINE FOR THE RETURN OF PERMISSION NOTES AND PAYMENT

To enable smooth planning of excursions and changes to routine, the deadline for the return of permission notes and payment will be three (3) school days before the planned date of the activity; 2 weeks prior to overnight activities.

Students who have not returned permission notes and payment by this deadline will be provided with an alternative program at school.

Parent information notes should clearly identify the deadline for notes and payment.

GENERAL POLICY & PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

The following information is provided to ensure that all aspects of the DEC Excursions Policy are considered in the planning process. This will ensure that excursion/change of routine activities are fully planned, support the curriculum and are conducted in as safe a manner as possible.

SCHOOL UNIFORM

Full school uniform must be worn to all excursions except when the nature of the activity requires alternative clothing.

The clothing requirements should be communicated to parents in the information note.

The wearing of school uniforms on an excursion greatly assists with:

- ❑ the easy identification of students;
- ❑ the effective supervision of students;
- ❑ the safe conduct of the excursion through the maintenance of an acceptable standard of discipline; and
- ❑ projecting a positive image of IPS and Public Education, to the wider community.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

Where a particular excursion activity requires special protective equipment or apparel (e.g. mouth guards, protective apparel), these must be used. Staff and student safety must not be compromised. Students and staff should be encouraged to use sunscreen and wear a peaked or broad brimmed hat on outdoor excursions.

MOUTH GUARDS – All sport notes should recommend to parents that students wear a mouth guard. The mouth guard information sheet from the *Guidelines for the Safe Conduct of Sport and Physical Activity in Schools 1999 (99/490)*, should be included in all sport notes.

VOLUNTEERS

The Department's duty of care owed to students for the duration of an excursion cannot be delegated from the school to parents, caregivers, volunteers or employees of external organisations.

The principal must be satisfied that there are sufficient teachers to maintain adequate control of the whole excursion. Teachers retain the ultimate responsibility for supervision.

On overnight excursions to Years 3-6 camp or a Year 3-6 major excursion, one parent volunteer from Year 3 is sought. If there is a sufficient need the principal may offer placements for parent/caregivers to attend. The teachers are responsible for the duty of care for all students. A briefing on safety and behaviour measures prior to the excursion will be held for volunteers who attend.

The Principal, through the organising teacher, must ensure that all parents, caregivers or volunteers accompanying school excursions complete a *Prohibited Employment Declaration* prior to the excursion. These forms are to be

completed for each activity undertaken. A summary of the Prohibited Employment Declaration and the signed declarations are to be filed with the original excursion submission, in the excursion folder.

SUPERVISION OF EXCURSIONS

Teacher to student ratio

The number of teachers to accompany the students for each excursion is to be determined by the principal in consultation with the organising teacher. Decisions about the number of students and teachers should take into account factors such as the age of the students, their maturity, the location of the excursion, specific needs of students, anticipated behaviour and the nature of the activities to be undertaken.

The Principal and organising teacher, in determining the number of teachers required for an excursion should be guided by Departmental statements on class sizes.

Fewer students per teacher will be necessary for some excursions such as bushwalking. Particular aquatic and outdoor recreation activities have specific teacher/instructor to student ratios. These are identified in the **Guidelines for Specific Activities section of Guidelines for the Safe Conduct of Sport and Physical Activity in Schools** policy.

There must be sufficient numbers of appropriate, responsible adults, including support teachers and teachers' aides, to ensure and assist with adequate supervision.

Overnight excursions

On overnight and extended excursions, supervisory and accommodation arrangements are to be such that no staff member or accompanying adult is placed in a position where there is potential for allegations of improper conduct to be made. In particular, sleeping and washing arrangements should not place any adults in a situation where the propriety of their behaviour could be questioned. Likewise, for sleeping and supervisory arrangements every attempt must be made to ensure that there is no sexual contact between students.

BRIEFING OF STUDENTS AND VOLUNTEER PARENTS

Prior to any excursion, students should be briefed on the school's expectations of their behaviour.

Students should also be briefed about their right to be safe and protected, about protective strategies and of avenues for support should concerns arise.

Organising teachers should take time to work with groups of students to consider unexpected situations and risks that might occur during the excursion and to discuss strategies, consistent with the risk management plan, for eliminating or controlling risks.

Students participating in excursions to communities which are culturally different to their own should be briefed on cultural sensitivities and appropriate communication in cross-cultural contexts.

Students should also be briefed on appropriate behaviour around animals. Reference should be made to the memorandum, *Cruelty to animals* (96/169) when considering the content of such briefings.

Prior to any excursion, if a volunteer is to be in attendance, a briefing is to be completed considering:

- ❑ The school's expectations regarding student behaviour and their role to refer misbehaviour or other issues to the class teacher or executive in charge of the excursion;
- ❑ The venue for the excursion and identified risks and how the risks will be managed

TRANSPORT

Bus and train travel

When hiring buses for excursions, principals should refer to the policy on the **use of seatbelts on buses (99/293)**. Seatbelts must be worn on buses and coaches when they are available.

The Principal and organising teachers, should attempt to hire buses with seatbelts wherever practicable and particularly for long distance travel. In the case of large vehicles, the number of passengers must not exceed the number that the vehicle is licensed to carry.

When organising an excursion by rail, principals should contact their local railway station concerning excursion concessions and other arrangements.

If students with disabilities are participating in an excursion, accessible transport will be required.

Car travel

The transporting of students in the cars of staff members, parents, caregivers or volunteers should only occur in those circumstances where there is no feasible option available to provide alternative transportation. This may only occur under the following conditions:

- written permission from the parent(s) or caregiver(s) of the student(s) being transported is obtained;
- the driver is licensed;
- the vehicle is registered;
- the number of passengers in the vehicle does not exceed the number of seatbelts;
- sufficient booster seats for students aged 5-7
- current driver's licence and car registration details are sighted by the school prior to giving permission for students to be transported in the vehicle.

Comprehensive insurance is not generally required. Nevertheless, comprehensive insurance is required if a member of staff is authorised to use his or her vehicle for official business and wishes to make a claim for the payment of mileage.

Principals must ensure that all parents, caregivers or volunteers who transport students in cars complete a *Prohibited Employment Declaration* prior to the excursion.

SWIMMING AND WATER ACTIVITIES

Where any excursion involves swimming or water activities, principals may encourage but not insist that parents provide any flotation devices considered necessary for students.

Parents must be asked to indicate the swimming ability of their children when giving consent for students to participate in excursions involving water activities.

If parents indicate students are poor or non-swimmers and no flotation devices are available for use by the students, principals will need to assess whether such students should participate in the swimming or water activities of the excursion. This assessment must take place irrespective of parental or caregiver permission for the students to participate in the swimming or water activities.

Principals and teachers organising excursions involving swimming and water activities should particularly consult the *Swimming and Water Safety* section of **Guidelines for the Safe Conduct of Sport and Physical Activity in Schools (99/490)**.

EXCURSION/CHANGE OF ROUTINE REFUNDS

Teachers plan a number of excursions, guest speakers and various activities which enhance the educational programs being offered in classrooms. These activities usually have a cost associated with them. Occasionally children are disappointed when they are unable to participate in the activity because they are sick on the day. In such cases parents will be refunded for the activity.

OBTAINING ORAL PERMISSION

In exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary for teachers to phone parents to obtain verbal permission for a child to attend an activity.

In such circumstances the phone call must be made from the school office, with a second member of staff present. Details of the call – date, time, person contacted must be recorded in the 'Verbal Permissions Book'.

During the call, the caller must ask parents if there are any medical issues of which the school may be currently unaware. These should be noted in the 'Verbal Permissions Book'.

ASSOCIATED MEMORANDA AND DOCUMENTS

Depending on the type of excursion, change to routine, sport or other activity, reference should be made to the following:

- ❑ Excursion Policy PD/2004/0010/V002
- ❑ Guidelines for Billeting Students (99/089)
- ❑ Guidelines for Schools and TAFE NSW Colleges and Campuses: Management of Serious Incidents (00/158)
- ❑ Guidelines for the Safe Conduct of Sport and Physical Activity in Schools 1999 (99/490)
www.sports.det.nsw.edu.au
- ❑ Guidelines for the Implementation of the Working with Children Check and Completion of Prohibited Employment Declarations (01/248)
- ❑ Occupational Health, Safety and Injury Management: A Guide for the principal or manager 1999
- ❑ Provision of Emergency Care and Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Training (96/043 96/096) and Emergency Care Manual Online (DN/03/91)
- ❑ Protecting and Supporting Children and Young People, Revised Procedures, December 2000 (00/496)
- ❑ Revision of Guidelines for Bushwalking (99/205)
- ❑ Use of seatbelts on buses (99/293)
- ❑ Welfare of Students While Engaged in Activities Conducted Under the Auspices of the School (97/138)

The following memoranda will also assist in risk management planning:

- ❑ Asthma Update 99/375
- ❑ Health Care and Safety Matters in all schools (published 1998)
- ❑ Portable Soccer Goal Posts – Manufacture, use and storage (00/231)
- ❑ Prohibited Use of Flammable Liquids for the Marking of Playing Fields (DN/02/00224)
- ❑ Safety Requirements for the Use and Storage of Starting Pistols and Caps (97/251)

DET memorandums and policies may be accessed at:

www.intranet.schools.nsw.edu.au/dse/D1.0/policies/index.html