

## CAMPS & EXCURSIONS POLICY

### **Rationale**

- The Safety Guidelines for Education Outdoors are in place to support the planning and approval of overnight excursions, camps, interstate and overseas visits, excursions requiring sea or air travel, excursions involving weekends or vacations and adventure activities. These excursions all require the approval of the School Council.
- When undertaking excursion planning, principals, teachers, School Councillors and others involved in school excursions (including camps and adventure activities), must anticipate the possibility of litigation following an incident or injury. They must be prepared for a detailed examination of their planning, actions and the curriculum role of any activity.
- The emergency management planning in schools extends to and incorporates school excursions.
- The school's excursion program enables children to further their learning and social skills development in a non-school setting. Excursions complement, and are an important aspect of the educational programs offered at our school.
- Schools must obtain written consent from parents or carers for school excursions, for the school to:
  - take children out of the school environment for a day excursion
  - have children in its care after normal school hours on an overnight excursion
  - for the financial costs of the excursion
  - for any adventure activities that may be undertaken during the excursion
  - for children to be sent home from an excursion in the event of serious misbehaviour and for the costs of the child's return to be the parent or carer's responsibility
  - consent to emergency medical treatment, if required
  - enable the parent or carer to alert the school to any medical conditions or allergies
- This is a mandatory policy if adventure activities which require the approval of School Council, are to be undertaken.

### **Purpose**

- To ensure that camps and excursions at Tarneit West Primary School (Interim Name) are planned and approved appropriately.
- To ensure that adventure activities are conducted safely.
- To ensure children are adequately prepared for camps and excursions.
- To ensure camps and adventure activities are planned and approved in accordance with Department of Education and Training (DET) policy and guidelines.
- To ensure that the school obtains informed consent from parents/carers for their child to participate in an excursion.
- To reinforce, complement and extend learning opportunities beyond the classroom.
- To develop an understanding that learning is not limited to school, and that valuable and powerful learning takes place in the real world.
- To gain first-hand experience of topics included in the school curriculum.

### **Definitions**

An excursion is an activity organised by a school during which children leave the school grounds to engage in educational activities (including camps and sport). Adventure activities are included in this definition (regardless of whether they occur outside the school grounds or not).

An adventure activity is an activity that involves greater than normal risk which may include travel into a relatively undeveloped area of the country in which vehicle contact is difficult or uncertain, confrontation with environmental challenges requiring greater reliance upon personal resources than would normally be required in day-to-day life, less than normal contact by person or by telephone, medical or other public services and/or exposure to natural elements with less than the normal physical protection afforded in everyday life.

Activities may include among others:

- Abseiling
- artificial climbing and abseiling walls
- bushwalking
- canoeing/kayaking
- challenging rope courses
- cross country skiing
- downhill skiing
- snowboarding
- cycling
- orienteering
- horse riding
- overnight camping
- surfing
- windsurfing
- water skiing
- sailing
- scuba diving
- sea kayaking
- snorkeling
- recreational swimming
- rafting

Activities such as bungee jumping, hang gliding, parachuting and flying ultra light aircraft are deemed unsuitable.

**Note:** Bush walking, cycling and overnight camping may be considered adventure activities where they involve greater than normal risk (as outlined above) and in the circumstances outlined in the activity descriptions in the Safety Guidelines for Education Outdoors.

Flying foxes may be used at school camps provided:

- safety precautions are taken in its construction and maintenance
- it can be locked or have the carriage removed when not in use
- all children are carefully briefed on its use and associated dangers
- staff supervise all use
- a safety harness is always used

Residential campsites are campsites which usually have permanent facilities (such as cooking and eating facilities, beds and an amenities block) and adventure recreation options. This definition does not include caravan parks, hotels/motels, ski lodges or Victorian government residential schools.

The Department recognises three accreditation providers:

- Australian Camps Association's Campsite and Outdoor Activity Provider program see: ACA Accredited Camps
- Australian Tourism Accreditation Program (ATAP) see: ATAP Accredited Businesses (select Accredited Camp and Adventure Activity Provider)
- National Accommodation, Recreation and Tourism Accreditation (NARTA) program see: NARTA Accredited Camps

Other venues may include:

- overnight campsites and venues that only provide accommodation such as caravan parks, hotels/motels or ski lodges
- Victorian government residential schools (for example: Rubicon Outdoor Centre or Bogong Outdoor Education Centre)
- interstate camps or excursions
- overseas venues.

ACA or NARTA programs' accreditation criteria may be used to assess the suitability and safety of these venues. However this criteria should be used when assessing overseas venues.

### **Implementation**

- The principal is responsible for the conduct of all excursions and must ensure:
  - excursions are planned, approved and conducted in accordance with DET policy & requirements
  - an online notification of school activity form is completed prior to the activity
  - compliance with Safety Guidelines for Education Outdoors which are mandatory for excursions requiring School Council approval
  - a planning and approvals process is undertaken, in accordance with DET policy and requirements, which takes into account the following considerations:
    - venue selection
    - safety, emergency and risk management
    - informed consent from parents/carers
    - medical information
    - appropriate staffing and supervision
    - student preparation and behaviour
    - requirements for any adventure activities
- With respect to arrangements between the school and third parties, the principal will:
  - carefully negotiate terms and conditions with third parties (e.g. travel agents, travel insurance companies, camp providers, specialist instructors, expedition providers) prior to accepting arrangements
  - ensure the terms of any travel insurance offered to the school by the third party are satisfactory

The planning and approval process will take into account the following considerations:

- The educational purpose of the excursion and its contribution to the curriculum which must be clarified and explained.
- Department approval requirements for excursions and staff travel
- maintenance of full records, including documentation of the planning process

Venues will be assessed and selected on the basis of their safety and suitability for the activities proposed. Where possible, venues will be selected based on the recent and first-hand knowledge (for example, through an inspection of the site by at least one member of the planning and supervising staff).

- Where external providers have been engaged to deliver specific activities or programs for children, or provide other services, the school retains responsibility for its children, as the duty of care of the school staff to children cannot be delegated to a third party.
- Criteria for assessing venues such as campsites or overnight accommodation venues include health and hygiene of buildings and facilities, activity equipment and the conduct of activities, certification and qualifications of venue staff, participant supervision provided, risks posed by other users of the site, emergency and risk management plans of venues, fire precautions, first aid facilities, quality assurance and consumer protection, relevant accreditations and references from other schools.
- Residential campsites must be accredited.
- The Teacher-in-Charge will check the venue on arrival to assess apparent dangers and hazards and prepare contingency plans if required.

### Safety, emergency and risk management

- The principal will ensure that appropriate emergency and risk management planning is undertaken for camps/excursions
- The teacher-in-charge, in conjunction with all staff attending must undertake a detailed analysis of all risks associated with the activity, procedures to be used in event of an emergency, arrangements if the activity needs to be cancelled or recalled e.g. due to adverse weather conditions, first aid requirements, any other measures for student and staff safety.
- All excursion staff must be familiar with emergency procedures for each excursion.
- Planning will cover arrangements if the camp/excursion needs to be cancelled, recalled or altered and will include arrangements for communicating with parent/carers.

Note that, as above, the principal is responsible for negotiating with third parties. School Councils and principals:

- must supply smoke detectors if indoor accommodation facilities do not have them
- should consider providing communication equipment to be used in emergencies

In the event of an emergency, accident or injury staff on the excursion should:

- take emergency action
- immediately notify the school principal.

The Principal should make arrangements for the Department's Security Services Unit to be telephoned on 9589 6266.

### Staffing and Supervision

The principal will ensure sufficient staff, including first aid trained staff, attend the camp. In determining the pupil/staff ratio, the experience, qualifications and skills of staff (including volunteers, instructors, etc.), the age, maturity, physical characteristics and gender of children, the ability and experience of the children, the size of the group, the nature and location of the excursion, the activities to be undertaken, the requirements outlined in the Safety Guidelines for Education Outdoors, for specific adventure activities and any other relevant factors including supervision factors if a student is injured or other emergency. Please refer also to joint excursions below.

- For day excursions, one staff member to twenty children is the minimum.
- Unless it is deemed that circumstances require a more liberal staffing arrangement, one staff member to ten children will be the ratio for overnight excursions. Please refer also to the attached supervision ratio for the circumstances requiring a specific ratio.
- Excursions must be under the direct control of a teacher employed by the DET, have enough DET employed staff to maintain control of the excursion and each activity with teachers comprising at least half of the excursion staff.
- Overnight stays for mixed gender groups must include a staff member of each sex.
- For small excursions in the local area, the principal may approve supervision by a non-teacher employed by DET e.g. an integration aide.
- Approved staff may include teachers, parents or carers, Education Support Class officers, community members, trainee teachers, campsite staff, specialist instructors. Excursion staff who are not teachers, must have a Working with Children Check with Tarneit West Primary School (interim name) listed as a work/volunteer organisation.

Note: Where external providers have been engaged to deliver specific activities or programs for children, or provide other services, the school retains responsibility for its children, as the duty of care of the school staff to children cannot be delegated to a third party.

### Student Preparation:

The school will ensure that:

- children are adequately prepared for excursions

- the disciplinary measures for children on excursions are appropriate and consistent with the Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy and Guidelines

In preparation for excursions, the school will advise children of:

- the organisational arrangements
- relevant safety arrangements or emergency procedures
- children and parents or carers:
- are informed of expected standards of behaviour
- that in extreme cases children may be sent home from an excursion at the cost of the parents.
- In extreme cases, the excursion staff, following consultation with and the approval of the principal, may decide to return a student to their home from an excursion.

Excursion staff will:

- advise the student's parent or carer of the circumstance associated with the decision to send the student home, the time when the parent or carer may collect their child from the excursion or the anticipated time that the student will arrive home but will consider the age and maturity of the student when making travelling arrangements.

Transportation requirements: public transport should be used if practicable with transport authorities consulted as to appropriate travel times and with at least two weeks' notice

#### Minimising Disruptions or Costs to Parents

The Principal will:

- Inform parents that any costs associated with the student returning from an excursion early due to illness or serious misbehaviour are the responsibility of the parent
- ensure parents are advised of the possibility of cancellations or alterations and of any cancellation fees imposed on the parents by third parties
- with respect to arrangements between the school and third parties, principals should:
- carefully negotiate terms and conditions with third parties (e.g. travel agents, travel insurance companies, camp providers, specialist instructors, expedition providers) prior to accepting arrangements
- ensure the terms of any travel insurance offered to the school by the third party are satisfactory
- There must be an assurance that the proposed activity meets the requirements of any school-level policy or procedure.

#### Consent

- The school will obtain informed, written or electronic consent (signatures) from parents/carers to take the children out of the school for a day excursion or to have the student in its care after normal school hours or overnight.
- Such parent/carer authorisation includes financial costs, any adventure activities that may be undertaken, for children to be sent home in the event of serious misbehaviour (with costs to be met by the parent/carer) and if necessary the school can consent to emergency medical treatment.
- Consent must also enable the parent/carer to alert the school to any medical conditions or allergies.
- The school may require additional information depending on the nature of the proposed activities.
- The school will give parents/carers, who are to sign consent forms, sufficient information about the camp/excursion to enable them to make an informed decision. This includes the nature of the proposed activity, degree of supervision and the risks involved.
- Consent forms will be kept at the school with a designated contact person and for excursions requiring School Council approval, the teacher-in-charge of the excursion will take a copy of each consent form on the excursion.

Please note:

An electronic signature can include:

- the use of username and password to verify the acceptance of the terms or consent
- a digitally encrypted image of a person's hand written signature
- email correspondence
- online scripts and pop-ups requiring "tick the box" and "accept"
- SMS

For an electronic signature to be valid, the school must have a process to ensure that it is the parent/carer providing the signature (i.e. requiring identification such as a password) and the parent/carer intends to provide their consent.

### Medical Information

- Children will not be denied attendance at the excursion because the parent/carer refuses permission for a blood transfusion.
  - The school may require additional information depending on the nature of the proposed activities.
  - A confidential medical information form will be completed by parents/carers before each School Council approved excursion. Any changes to medical information previously provided to the school must be highlighted. The teacher-in-charge will take the medical information forms on the excursion and ensure these forms are available to other excursion staff in emergency situations. Copies will be kept at school.
  - The school will use the DET recommended medical form.
  - Any information which has been provided by specialists in the activities proposed will be taken into account.
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- Staff and children will have appropriate clothing and personal equipment.
  - Technical equipment will be in good condition and suitable for the activities undertaken.
  - School Council approved camps/excursions will have an emergency response plan.
  - All excursion staff will be familiar with emergency procedures for each camp.
  - When staying at a residential campsite emergency procedures must be explained as soon as practicable after arrival and a trial evacuation exercise should be carried out immediately to ensure that procedures are appropriate and staff and children are familiar with them.
  - Parents/carers will be advised of the telephone numbers (both during and outside school hours) for the designated school contact person in the event of an emergency.
  - During the excursion, if parents/carers have reason to believe an emergency may have occurred (such as a media report) they will be informed that in the first instance they should call the contact person and not personnel on the excursion as this will keep the telephone lines free at the excursion site.
  - Arrangements for communicating with parents/carers in the event of an emergency, cancellation or recall of the excursion will be made.

### Fire Danger or Ban

- The principal will be prepared to cancel an excursion at short notice on days of extreme fire danger or total fire ban. On such days, the Security Services Unit liaises with fire authorities to obtain up to date information for communication to schools that may be affected by wildfire, including schools that may have children attending camps or other venues in areas affected by wildfire. If an excursion is not cancelled, special fire safety precautions will be required. When required, schools must follow the Department's emergency management (bushfires) procedures for off-site activities for all excursions.
- In the event of an emergency, accident or injury, staff on the excursion will take emergency action, then immediately notify the School Principal who should make arrangements for the Department's Security Services Unit to be telephoned on 9589 6266.

### First Aid

- The teacher-in-charge will ensure that sufficient first aid equipment is available including portable first aid equipment.
  - At least one staff member for each group of children must have first aid qualifications.
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- Children (and parents/carers) will be fully informed about the organisational arrangements, safety and emergency procedures, and the behavioural expectations and (misbehaviour) consequences of the camp/excursion including the non-consumption of alcohol. In extreme circumstances, after full consideration, consultation and information, a child may be sent home from the activity.
  - Staff are expected to act in accordance with their duty of care to children, which is in force during the entire time of the camp or excursion and must be aware that consumption of alcohol by staff during camps or excursions is:
    - inconsistent with the standard of professional conduct necessary to maintain community confidence in these activities
    - is considered unwise
    - could lead to allegations of negligence and loss of WorkCover rights
  - Continuous instruction will be provided for children remaining at the school during the absence of staff accompanying the excursion.
  - For an excursion requiring School Council approval, an approval pro-forma ensuring compliance with the above will be completed and submitted to the principal and School Council before the excursion may proceed.
  - At least three weeks prior to the camp, the teacher in charge also will submit a Student Activity Locator (SAL) on-line form.
  - Full records including documentation of the planning process will be maintained.
  - Excursions and incursions other than those listed above only require the approval of the principal and the permission of parents/carers.
  - The Regional Director will be informed if an excursion leaves a school unoccupied.
  - When undertaking excursion planning, the principal, teachers, School Councillors and others involved in the activity (including camps and adventure activities), must anticipate the possibility of litigation following an incident or injury. They must be prepared for a detailed examination of their planning, actions and the curriculum role of any activity.
  - For joint school activities, a nominated coordinating principal (or teacher) will ensure all planning and approval requirements are met and will advise parents/carers that their children may be supervised by teachers and approved adults from the other school.

Note: All schools involved in a joint excursion must complete an online SAL notification form.

- Children will not be denied attendance at any camp or excursion because of disability or medical condition. The school will take reasonable steps to support the inclusion of all children. Parents/carers will be advised to make an appointment with the school contact person (please refer to the *Parent Payments Policy*) who is authorised to make decisions about family hardship considerations on a case-by-case basis.
- Interstate or overseas excursions require special consideration. For interstate excursions, staff must be approved by the Regional Director. For overseas excursions, staff must be approved by the Deputy Secretary, Regional Services Group. A school travel application Form must be submitted at least six weeks before the proposed departure date.
- All parents holding a current Health Care Card or Veterans Card are eligible to apply for the Camps Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF). This money will be used only to pay/offset for camps, sports and excursions.

- Please refer to the website below for more information on overseas travel.
- Please refer also to the school's *Duty of Care Policy* and the *Risk Management Policy*.

**Evaluation**

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle or if guidelines change (latest DET updates late January 2018).

<u>Ratification</u>	<u>Review Date</u>	<u>Policy Number</u>	<u>Version Number</u>	<u>Date Produced</u>
May 2018	2021	14	1	September 2017

References:

- <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/excursions.aspx>
- <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/adventure.aspx>
- <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/consent.aspx>
- <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/staffing.aspx>
- <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/venue.aspx>
- <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/medicalinfo.aspx>
- <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/approvals.aspx>